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ABSTRACT

Discussions over the last 2 decades about the possible reform of low socioeconomic schools and teaching practices originate in the effectiveness and improvement (E&I) fields of educational research, which proclaim that teachers and schools "can make a difference." But the message has been thoroughly overplayed. This work focuses on the effect of "school mix" (the social-class composition of a school's student intake) on school processes and student achievement. The view that school mix may have a significant influence on school processes challenges current thinking in the E&I fields. To examine school mix and its implications, the findings of an empirical study of students and schools are discussed using a variety of interviews, questionnaires, and classroom and school observations. Much of the so-called "school effect" found by school effectiveness studies may not reflect a school's effectiveness at all, but may be indirectly related to student-body characteristics vis-a-vis school processes that are influenced by school mix. (Contains notes, an index, and 16 pages of references.) (DFR)

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